In ruffling through old memories surrounding the time Gunvor Nelson and I started making films, I found the reminiscences tinged with great fondness, hilarity, and gratitude. I was so fortunate to find myself in 1964 in a community of the most remarkable artists and in a wider community of the most ramarkable richness--San Francisco in the 60s--how I miss it--that flowering of possibility and love. Having grown up in a rather drab and conforming government town, the excitement of knowing artists of all types, musicians, poets, theatre people, photographers, writers, etc. -- it was thrilling. I remember meeting Gunvor, that dazzling blond from Sweden, and her husband, Bob, and then becoming their neighbor later at Muir Beach. Gunvor and Bob had their masters degrees from art school and were mainly painters. Bob had taken a little photography in art school and he became interested in movies, got hold of a 16mm camera, and he and Gunvor made a couple of little films. Then Bob and my husband, Bill Wiley, started working on films with Ronnie Davis's Mime Troup and Steve Reich. Because Gunvor was still intrigued with film she asked me if I would be interested in making a movie together. My background was English, I had been a highschool English teacher, but I didn't hesitate. Gunvor remembers Bob giving her about a half-hour lesson on how to use the camera, then Gunvor taught me, and off we went to make a film. But we didn't go very far. We started filming things around the house. We each had a young child. Oona was about 3, and Ethan 4 years old. We did a lot of filming with the kids around, but often I remember prevailing on poor Mary Collier to babysit for us, and she with 4 boys of her own, trying to do her own work. But she rarely declined. Muir Beach was a wonderful community in those days.

So we were just getting into the film when I got pregnant and very sick. I threw up every day for 9 months. So we had to put the film on the shelf for awhile, although we took some footage. Strangely enough, with so many opportunities to film me throwing up, we never did and had to fake it afterward with vegetable soup. I felt much better as soon as I had the baby so we got right back to work--off to film the women at Roller Derby, etc.-- and had the film finished by Christmas. Bill Graham was working with the Mime Troup and he arranged a New Year's eve program at a theatre in Sausalito. It is no longer there - the Gateway Theatre? - I'm not sure of the name. Among many acts that night I remember Jeanne Brechan belting out Mariah while she played the piano. The Moving Van Walters band played. There were other films and then they showed Schmeerguntz. We had no idea what to expect but there was wild applause. Of course it <u>was</u> New Year's Eve. But with such a positive response it encouraged us to enter Schmeerguntz in the Ann Arbor Film Festival.They gave out three 1st prizes that year, instead of a 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, and we got one of them.

I would like to add a historical note concerning Schmeerguntz. Although Betty Friedan's book The Feminine Mystique was published, I believe about 1963, Gunvor and I were not aware of the book nor had we ever heard anything about the women's liberation movement when we made this film. I read The Feminine Mystique a year or two after we made the film and I understood much better what we had expressed from our own experience.Also, Schmeerguntz was finished in 1965 and it wasn't until 1968 that a group of women went down to Atlanta to protest the Miss America Pageant and it hit the headlines they had burnt their bras (even though they hadn't). Our footage and sound of the Miss America contest was filmed right off the TV in 1965. As beginners in film, when we made Schmeerguntz, I don't believe we even had a workprint, I'm certain we didn't know about A and B rolls, but we had a lot of fun experimenting.

We had a neighbor that wasn't the best housekeeper, and we asked to film at her house to illustrate some of our points. I know that when we were trying to capture some of the cruddiness of life and we looked thru the camera at say, piles of dirty dishes left on the table till the next day, or a filthy refrigerator, what we saw in the camera was etherially beautiful, the light would illuminate objects as if we were in heaven, and we fell in love with film.

I'm not going to comment on the qualities of Gunvor's films that make them so inventive and beautiful, nor on her teaching, except to say she was a very good teacher for me, but I would like to say that one thing that Gunvor has brought to a life in film is a lot of very hard work. Bringing into film a painter's refined sensibility of color and other aethetic concerns, she has had to overcome some daunting obstacles to get what she wants in a medium that is often hard to control. She has always had very strong preferences and opinions about what she wants, and an ability to intensely focus her energy and attention and a tenacity that will see a project through, no matter how much work it takes.

Gunvor has been my good friend all these years and when she moves back to Sweden I will miss her. We had such fun making films. I remember a lot of hilarity. I hope she can come back and visit.

Dorothy Wiley
October 23, 1992

Dear Steve,

I hope this is OK. It's kind of what I was going to say on Nov. 12th ....

Dorothy Ulery